

Discuss the value of outdoor adventure (OA) programmes in a post-modern society.

The post-modern society has affected the world in many ways, technology, science, health, and wellbeing. Within these advancements, over a brief period, humanity has evolved and so has the great outdoors in which we work, live, and thrive. We live in a period that the entire world is open for all of us to explore, but the advancement of post-modern society has advanced so quickly, that to some cultures the great outdoors is something of the past. In communities and countries around the UK the initiative to reintroduce the wide populous into the great outdoors and to use it to teach kids the fundamentals. Kahn and Kellert (2002) stated that physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, and moral development could be affected by indirect and direct experiences but the scientific research on that notion is sparse. The relationship we have with the outdoors and how we interact with it is a noticeably big part of our developing lives and the ever-evolving planet. Outdoor adventure programmes are a step forward in introducing the population to their local environment.

Everywhere you go in the UK you will find outdoor venues, caravan parks, and outdoor pursuit centres, with each of them having its own goal and agenda to fit the market and requirements of the modern world. PGL (Parents Get Lost), a local dominant outdoor company has had to change with the times and circumstances “Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s the ‘PGL Experience’ was based on three main activities - canoeing, sailing and pony trekking, with accommodation in tents. PGL's initial market was young adults, but during these early years the company established a key position in the organised school group market...Diversification into other markets has been a major part of the company's growth over the years, with development via educational travel for schools, IT and field study courses” (PGL, no date). Inflation is a key reason the outdoor companies had to revise their policies and business models (Kopp, 2023). From 1960 till 2023 the average inflation over the years has been “2,052.01%” (WorldData, 2015) to “2,740.07%” (Webster, 2023), the increase in inflation has caused the outdoor activity centre to increase the number of activities ranging from rifle shooting to giant swing. These new activities are promoted to allow a wider range of fun that will be inclusive of everyone, leading to more people and school groups wanting to experience PGL, making a large gross profit for the company making sure it can stay open for the public to enjoy. If they did not increase the number of activities to

cater to everyone, they would find it impossible to find the clientele to support their massive industry.

My own experience working at PGL gave me a great insight into the intensity employees endure, fitting five different activities into one day, whereas competitors are only doing two to three activities. This shift of adding more activities allows the company to charge more for stay at the activity centre, the company in my own opinion decreases the experiential learning the participants get, this is because of the brief time limit of each session, participants only get one or two chances at that activity. The need to increase the amount of activities in a day allowing for more profit has diminished the potential benefits of the outdoors mentioned by Kahn and Kellert.

Senedd Wales (2022) introduced the Outdoor education Bill, within this initiative of bringing outdoor studies and lessons back into the mainstream school curriculum, one of the key aspects of that curriculum is sustainability. Kuhlman and Farrington suggested that “The term sustainability has become popular in policy-oriented research as an expression of what public policies ought to achieve” (2010). This means each person or persons must keep up their role of looking after the environment. Working as a part-time ranger (at Haven, Kiln Park) I gained the understanding that the initiative to include outdoor studies in the curriculum is already affecting the children, each session of nature walks or bug hunting, I learned that they have been taught about how to look after a habitat and how to make one to sustain the environment in their backyard. Out of hundreds of kids that joined my sessions, eighty percent had made their own bug hotel in their back garden. “Insects and other minibeasts need safe spaces to shelter, hide from predators and raise their young. You can help them by building a bug hotel in your garden or outside area.” (Wesley, 2019).

The ability to enter the wilderness and come out of it exactly how you found it, is not one hundred percent. “Friends of the Lake District commissioned a unique survey which found more than a quarter of them (26%) admit to leaving litter behind, and many (52%) expect to find litter bins even in the remotest wild valleys and fells” (Friends of the Lake District, no date). These figures may have occurred from the lack of understanding of the public policies, if England and Scotland also introduce the initiative then the figures that the organisation found might have a downward trend in their findings in the future.

Outdoor adventure has a lot of benefits when it comes to health, Physical exercise, fresh air, the exposure to nature is just a few of them. Health can be defined as “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organisation, 1948). On the other hand, it could also be defined as “health is a state of balance, an equilibrium that an individual has established within himself and between himself and his social and physical environment” (Sartorius, 2006), these two definitions are very similar but also have one aspect that defines the difference between them. Sartorius’s excludes the fact from WHO’s definition, that you can have a disease but also be healthy. Mental health is a large reason people join in with outdoor recreation. As Miller et al. (2023) observe, 63% of respondents view outdoor activity as a mental health retreat. Miller et al go on to explain that the value of the mental health sector is 26.54m in Wales alone. In 2020, Covid 19 had a big influential impact on everyone’s lives around the world. Data suggests (Office for National Statistics, 2021) that towards the latter half of the first lockdown, there was a significant increase in visits to parks. This data suggests that in that period, although COVID was still a huge part of everyone’s lives, a huge part of coping with it was going outdoors to a park.

Education is the basis of where everyone’s knowledge has come from, Craft (1984) explained that there are two meanings to the word education. Educare, to mold something, and educere means to lead out. These are two very simplified meanings of the word education in relation the same. Educere for outdoor adventure programmes allows us a better understanding of their importance of them, Bass and Good quoted “The other side sees education as preparing a new generation for the changes that are to come” (2004, p. 8), Bass and Good understood that this is a more effective way of educating, leading to the adapting and overcoming future generations leading to a more positive future instead of a mundane morrow. Institute of Outdoor Learning is a large charity that forwards the promotion of outdoor education and safe practice (Anderson, 2019). The Institute regards education highly, supporting other networks that provide apprenticeships toward outdoor instructing (Anderson, 2019). I experienced firsthand the apprenticeship, it was my first experience in the instructing industry, learning about practices and how to pass on the knowledge to guests at the residential. The insight it gave me, allowed me the choice to use it however I wanted instead of a regimented ideal and only a path the tutor wanted me to follow. Unfortunately, the educere way of education is far less used in the classroom leading to the education system being suspended in a systemic modus operandi (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Outdoor adventure programmes are at the heart of the UK's outdoor society. Each have their own agenda in mind, making it a vast community that work coherently together for a brighter more sustainable future. Believing that each of the programmes that involve activity centres work together, contributing to a wide varied position in the countries educational and economical system. Charities and trusts have become common place within our lives, and they are a crucial remembrance that there is a bigger picture, contributing to sustainable outcomes and supporting experiential experiences. The value of an outdoor adventure program is subjective to an individual who is out of education, alternatively it can be argued that the programmes should be mandatory within the educational system. As Fawcett (2022) summarises, Children are themselves the most impressionable, learning through trial and error allowing them to think independently, experience imaginative education free from everyday norms.

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